

American Baptists Concerned

American Baptists Concerned
198 Santa Clara Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610

american baptists concerned

We are a fellowship of both gay and non-gay Christians working to foster within our church (American Baptist Churches in the USA) a community of understanding, justice and reconciliation for all women and men regardless of their sexual orientation or affectional preference.

BEGINNINGS

In May of 1972, American Baptist gay people became both vocal and visible for the first time at the national American Baptist convention in Denver, Colorado. American Baptists Concerned grew out of these first efforts toward recognition. We have continued since that time in a consciousness-raising endeavor to acquaint both lay persons and ABC church professionals with the fact that gay people do exist within the ABC and that this issue is one which the church needs to face.

We are dismayed by the alienation and condemnation that has been evidenced when gay people have sought to be an open and honorable part of the Christian fellowship of believers. We believe that Jesus Christ has promised redemption and abundant life to all humankind.

OUR MEMBERSHIP

Our membership is diverse. We are women and men, gay and non-gay. We are found in the pulpits and in the pews in active support of ABC churches throughout the country. Some of us speak from public platforms while others work behind the scenes in research, counseling, educational efforts and communications media.

OUR PURPOSE AND HOPE

The purpose of American Baptists Concerned is to unite gay people and their families and friends within the ABCUSA for mutual assistance, education, support and communication. To this end we cooperate with other ABC groups as well as other denominationally affiliated groups in tasks of mutual interest.

Our hope is to persuade the ABCUSA to face honestly, aggressively and forthrightly the questions and needs of gay people within the church and also those driven from the church by its lack of understanding. We want to work within the church and with the church in proclaiming the Christian gospel of love, joy, and reconciliation.

We support the ABCUSA in its ministry and mission throughout the world as part of the universal church of Jesus Christ.



"Behold the turtle: it makes progress only when it sticks its neck out."

James B. Conant

VOICE OF THE TURTLE

Our newsletter, "Voice of the Turtle," is published quarterly and keeps our members and friends up to date on the caucus activities. We include national religious news, book reviews, thoughtful editorials, words from our members and other information which is geared to the interests of our readers.

All work on the "Voice of the Turtle" is done by volunteers. Our expenses are paid from newsletter subscriptions of \$5.00 per year and other voluntary contributions which are gratefully accepted.

Our mailing list is strictly confidential.

WON'T YOU JOIN US?

Be a Turtle!

Subscribe to The Voice of the Turtle

One-year subscription \$5.00

Other donations are gratefully accepted.

If the fee is beyond your means, let us know and we will make other arrangements.

Make checks payable to "American Baptists Concerned" and mail to:

American Baptists Concerned
c/o 198 Santa Clara Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Zip Code _____

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Make checks payable to "American Baptists
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American Baptist's Concerned
c/o Barbra MacNair
198 Santa Clara Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610

Name _____

Address _____

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OUR MAILING LIST
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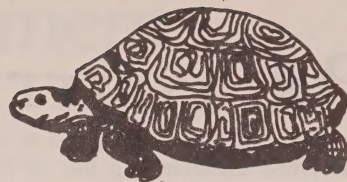
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Voice of the Turtle

April-June 1979, Vol. III, No. 2

The American Baptists Concerned (a gay caucus) publishes this newsletter, VOICE OF THE TURTLE, quarterly. The name and address of a person or business herein is not to be construed as an indication of sexual preference.



"Behold the turtle: it makes progress only when it sticks its neck out."

James B. Conant

CARBONDALE UPDATE

Rodger, Rick and I all plan to be present at the biennial meeting of the ABCUSA in Carbondale, Illinois, June 6-10, 1979. (Ted will still be involved with his teaching in West Africa but will be with us in spirit.) We will be registered as delegates or visitors and will be staying on campus. Because we have not been officially recognized as yet, we will not have space in the exhibit hall. However, we will post meeting notices in appropriate places and hopefully will be easy to find.

We are planning a special biennial edition of the VOICE OF THE TURTLE with statements from prominent ABC leaders. Our turtle and its provocative slogan will be with us on buttons printed for the occasion. We will also have informational material available including reprints of magazine and journal articles, past issues of the TURTLE, bibliographies and brochures describing us and our work.

We hope also to have some sort of educational event geared to people who wish to understand the concerns of our caucus. We hope, among other things, to be able to provide support for pastors, families and friends of gay people. Our finances are limited so we are still in the process of determining the best use of our money.

We hope to meet many of you with whom we have corresponded and will be counting on some of you to help in our efforts. We ask for your prayers as we continue in our efforts to persuade delegates and leaders at the convention to face honestly, aggressively and forthrightly the questions and needs of gay people both within the ABCUSA and those driven from the church by its lack of understanding.

Looking forward to greeting you at Carbondale,

Barbra MacNair

NEW ANTI-GAY LOBBY FORMED

A major new lobby, enlisting evangelical Christians and aiming at legislation against gay people, has opened a Washington office and begun a high-powered lobbying effort.

The new lobby, Christian Voice, promises an intense anti-gay campaign in Congress and hopes to use the religious broadcasting networks to reach millions of voters, Gay Rights National Lobby Executive Director Steve Endean said.

"There is a strong possibility that Christian Voice may not only scare Congress from legislation designed to guarantee civil rights for lesbians and gay men, but that the Christian Voice campaign could also result in the enactment of specifically anti-gay legislation as well," Endean warned. "While the immediate impact would be felt at the national level, Christian Voice's organizing and development of constituent support around the country could well eventually have a profound impact on local gay civil rights efforts as well."

A Christian Voice Congressional Advisory Committee already has enlisted 11 members of Congress. They are" Senators Orrin Hatch, Gordon Humphrey and Roger Jepsen and Representatives Dan Crane, Robert Dornan, George Hansen, Tom Kindness, Trent Lott, Larry McDonald, Ron Paul and Floyd Spence. More members are expected to join.

"This is a very serious threat to the progress of our movement," Endean said. "Christian Voice claims a million dollar campaign fund and expects to have a million supporters in its first year. While many groups exaggerate their resources, those familiar with the evangelical Christian movement believe the figures may well be accurate. The successful enlistment of the evangelical Christian movement into political activism against gay people cannot be dismissed."

(continued on page 8)

Pot~Pourri

Dear Christian Friends,

Here I am again in Monrovia, LIBERIA, West Africa, for my second year of teaching. It was quite another experience to get off the plane last month and to realize: "I am HOME." That awareness can only come when we are committed to answering the call of God for whatever and wherever is in God's plan for us. The educational process here is demanding for qualified and conscientious teachers who love their profession and their students. The hours are long, but the rewards are immeasurable.

Flying across the Atlantic I was delighted by a short story by Ed Minus, pages 76-81 in the February 1979 issue of Atlantic magazine. It is a refreshing and completely believable story of two young college students who fall in love and recognize the importance of the other. The two persons just happen to be male. Don't miss this story! I shall reread it often in the years to come.

In thinking upon the upcoming ABC Biennial in Carbondale, these reflections: "He broke fresh ground—because, and only because, he had the courage to go ahead without asking whether others were following, or even understood. He had no need for the divided responsibility in which others seek to be safe from ridicule, because he had been granted a faith which required no confirmation—a contact with reality, light and intense like the touch of a loved hand; a union in self-surrender without self-destruction where his heart was lucid and his mind loving. In sun and wind, how near and how remote—how different from what the knowing ones call mysticism." (Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings, page 110).

Walking along the beach here in Monrovia, I remember Anne Morrow Lindberg's Gift From The Sea and from page 64, this: "...strangers smile at you on the beach, come up and offer you a shell, for no reason, lightly, and then go by and leave you alone again. Nothing is demanded of you in payment, no social rite is expected, no tie established. It was a gift, freely offered, freely taken, in mutual trust. People smile at you here, like children, sure that you will not rebuff them, that you will smile back. And you do, because you know it will involve nothing.

Sr. Jeannine Gramick and Fr. Robert Nugent of New Ways Ministry in Maryland have received a grant from National Institutes of Health to pursue a study of the "coming-out process and coping strategies" of gay women. Both Sr. Gramick and Fr. Nugent have been involved since 1971 in a ministry to the gay community, and their study will be distinguished from others by proceeding on the assumption that being gay is a valid expression of one's personality, involving more than simply sexual preference, instead of an illness or disorder.

The study will involve confidential, in-depth interviews with a hundred women in the Washington, D.C./Baltimore area. Volunteers from a wide variety of religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds, and of all different ages are now being sought.

For more information, please write to the New Ways Ministry office at 3312 Buchanan Street, #302, Mr. Ranier, MD 20822; or, in the Washington area, Call Sr. Gramick at (301) 864-7149, and in the Baltimore area, call Fr. Nugent at (301) 433-0794.

The smile, the act, the relationship is hung in space, in the immediacy and purity of the present; suspended on the still point of here and now balanced there, on a shaft of air, like a seagull."

And from Emmet Fox (Love): "There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer; No disease that enough love will not heal; No door that enough love will not open; No gulf that enough love will not bridge; No wall that enough love will not throw down; No sin that enough love will not redeem... It makes no difference how deeply seated may be the trouble, how hopeless the outlook, how manifest the tangle, how great the mistake. ...A sufficient realization of love will dissolve it all. If only you could love enough, you would be the happiest and most powerful being in the world."

Remembering all of you in these days of challenge and change. In the bonds of God's all-encompassing LOVE,

Ted Weeman, PCV
P.O. Box 707
Peace Corps
Monrovia, Liberia
WEST AFRICA

Editorial Comment

MUSINGS ON MENDACITY

In December of last year, my second request for ordination was turned down by the American Baptist Churches of the West. This rejection marks the end of another phase in my odyssey to gain recognition from American Baptists of the ministry to which God has called me. This process of request and rejection is painful yet necessary if American Baptists are ever to include gay persons as full members of the fellowship.

The exclusion of gay people from American Baptist churches is reprehensible and un-Christian. (This exclusion is usually accompanied by a self-righteous condemnation of gay people to hell.) But an even more insidious form of discrimination is the one which allows gay people into the fellowship as sinners among other sinners. This attitude keeps gay people in a state of sinfulness until they are somehow saved from their sexual orientation. The net effect of this attitude is to exclude most gay people from the church and to keep those gay people who remain in the church in turmoil over their second class citizenship. For no one who is unrepentant (unstraight) is worthy of full membership (which includes leadership) in the church. (This is basically the position of UPC/USA.)

While it is true that each of us has sinned and is needy of being reconciled to God, it is incorrect to assume that the gay person's sin is simply being whom God has made her/him to be. That is, it is not the condition of being gay which causes estrangement from God, but rather it is the way in which any individual gay person may unlovingly misuse the gift of her/his sexuality.

I am a sinner and I believe in the power of repentance, confession and redeeming grace. But my sexual orientation is not a source of my separation from God. To the contrary, my efforts to deny my sexual orientation have caused me individual fragmentation, alienation from my sisters and brothers and estrangement from God. As I have experienced God's acceptance of me as God created me, I have come to celebrate my being and to share life more fully with those around me. I have a way to go but the loving acceptance of my gayness has helped to set me on the right track toward full communion with God and God's creation.

So I believe the American Baptist churches must eventually come to the place where we all realize

that being gay is of God and no hindrance, but rather an asset to full participation in the life of the church.

One executive minister told me I could be ordained in his region if I would just keep my mouth shut about being gay. He said this was the debt I owed to the "representational nature of the ministry." His assumption seems to be that it doesn't matter what kind of person a minister is as long as she/he keeps up a respectable front.

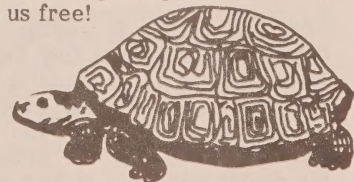
Now I have two reactions to this offer. First, I would say there is nothing in my being gay that is not respectable. I like being who I am and would want to share the struggle and joy of my life process with my parishioners.

Secondly, I would say along with Big Daddy in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," that there's a powerful odor of mendacity in this house." How can the church of Jesus Christ be founded on dishonesty? When God calls some of us to professional ministry, this is a calling to be instruments of God's working and willing. We are not called to be "holier" than our parishioners. Our calling is to share life together and to facilitate growth in Christ. How can these tasks be accomplished where there is not trust? And how can there be trust where there is deceit?

If the professional ministry of our churches is characterized by such deceit, then it is little wonder that we have so little impact on the world. People see through our hypocrisy and ignore us in droves. When will we come to the realization that God is best served and the Gospel best communicated in loving, open, sharing communities where everyone is acceptable as she/he is and where there are no second class citizens?

Join us in Carbondale! Help to spread the news that Christ has set us free!

Rick Mixon



"Behold the turtle: it makes progress only when it sticks its neck out."

James B. Conant

President's Corner

Dear Friends,

On January 24th, our MCC in Santa Ana was burned to the ground by arson. The loss of the 83-year old redwood building was devastating. Last Sunday I worshipped in Tucson's Catalina Baptist church and thought of all the hard work and planning involved in building a new house of worship. Out of the ashes we are discovering new friends and some wonderful advocates. "Parents and Friends of Gay People" came out in force to help with the demolition of our old building. Whereas the early development of the gay movement seemed to lead to separatism, now a new wind of integration is blowing which will erase the artificial nomenclature of "homosexual" and "heterosexual."

Three of us met with the Credentials and Caucus Committee on December 2, 1978. A letter from Harrison E. Williams, December 27th contains this information:

"The Committee was unable to reach a consensus concerning whether information furnished by the gay caucus met the criteria which has been established for Special Interest Groups. The Committee requests further information concerning criteria (4).

Standing Rule 14.4.2 states in part:

"A Special Interest Group shall include: (4) having a common interest or concern which it may desire to register with the General Board by proposing policy statements and resolutions for consideration."

It would be helpful to the Committee to learn from you the specific nature of the proposals or policy statements which you would make to the General Board in response to this provision if the General Board should grant recognition to American Baptists Concerned as a Special Interest Group.

The Committee is buying time, but at what price? The National Gay Task Force received a letter from a 14-year-old in a New England city who was having a sexual identity crisis. He went to his school teacher who told him it was a "phase" out of which he would grow. He went to his pastor who told him it was a "sin." When a member of the task force telephoned the home, a distraught mother reported that her son had just

hung himself in the garage. He could not cope with the "phase" or the "sin."

When I was in a major city recently, a 27-year-old disappeared after his mother said, "I'd rather have you dead than homosexual." His body was discovered 10 days later near a mountain road. ABCUSA can buy all the time they want before officially recognizing the gay men and lesbians who have always been there, but what will the price be in suicide, unhappy marriages, anguish and inner torment?

What are the "common interests or concerns" you want us to register with the General Board? Let us hear from you. Martin Rock from the Brethren/Mennonite Council for Gay Concerns suggests seven which we might consider:

1. Gay people are asking simply that we be treated as Christ would have us treat every human being—with love, respect, understanding, and openness.
2. We are asking for dialogue—there is a very great need for understanding on both sides, whether or not agreement is reached.
3. We are asking the church to educate itself, not just about homosexuality, but about human sexuality and human sexual development in general.
4. Gay people are aware that the ABCUSA continues to work for human rights of people in the United States and around the world. We gay people are asking that the church now work to guarantee human rights for gay people as well. Gay people are your loving neighbors. We need jobs, housing, food, education just like everyone else. To deny, or to stand by while others deny gay people these basic human rights is certainly to fail in obeying the second greatest commandment.
5. As a church that works for peace and reconciliation among people, we are asking ABCUSA to take a stand against homophobia—the widespread contempt for and fear of homosexual persons—which leads to acts of hatred, harassment, and violence.
6. We also ask our non-gay sisters and brothers in the ABCUSA to join with us in refreshing and enlarging our understanding of scripture and God's will for each of us.

(continued on page 8)

Models In Ministry

BOSTON UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS CONTINUE FUNDING GAY OFFICE

In what proved to be a strong endorsement for the only existing denominationally supported Office of Gay Concerns, the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Churches, meeting in Boston, voted to continue funding the Board. The decision came against the recommendation of the Board's own finance committee.

When the votes were counted, retention of the Associate Director's position was in third place and assured of being retained for at least another year. The Trustees had, therefore, continued support of gay issues in a course begun in 1970. In that year, meeting in Toronto, Unitarian Universalists first voted "to end all discrimination against homosexuals, homosexuality, bisexuals, and bisexuality" and urged all churches and fellowships to initiate meaningful programs.

Bob Wheatly, the incumbent Associate Director and co-chair of Boston Unitarian Universalist Gays and Lesbians said, "Now I can concentrate on doing my work without the threat of termination. We already have a packet of informational materials being distributed to the churches and fellowships and are working on a series of educational units that will further formalize the educational process we have begun."

"However, we need to do more to let our congregations know who we are. Too many gays and lesbians (here) are closeted still. In many cases their fears could be overcome with a little more support locally. I'm trying to encourage that. The people in our churches need to know that we aren't 'out there' somewhere, but are right there sitting next to them in church."

(from the Gay Community News, Boston)

PARISH GIVES \$100

A tiny Washington, D.C. congregation has given \$100 to Lutherans Concerned for use in its ministry of education to the Lutheran churches.

It is the second cash gift from the Community of Christ. The ALC parish, which has only 30 baptized members, made a grant of \$300 in 1977.

EVANGELICAL EDITOR SPEAKS OUT ON GAYS SEX LIFE.

Dr. Walden Howard, editor of "Faith at Work", an evangelical magazine, has rather liberal views on gay sex. He wrote to Rick Miles, Evangelicals Concerned Midwest coordinator: "I wish we could say to homosexuals that the Gospel promises a real change in orientation, because heterosexuality seems to me quite clearly to be the intent of the Creator. But since that kind of change seems to be a rare occurrence and since sexuality is so deeply and so totally a part of our personalities, it seems very un-Christ-like to deny to people the possibility of any overt expression of the sexuality that is natural to them. So, with you, I think, the emphasis must be put upon 'ethical, responsible use of one's sexual orientation,' whether homosexual or heterosexual. And I am now willing to stand on that ground until I am persuaded differently."

UNA KROLL CALLED FOR THE CHURCH TO BLESS HOMOSEXUAL UNIONS, NOT "MARRIAGES"

The Reverend Deacon Una Kroll, M.D., an advocate of women priests in the Church of England, was widely misquoted as calling for the Church to bless homosexual marriages. What she in fact said was "I cannot think that it is right for all heterosexual unions to be blessed by the church while all homosexual unions are excluded from such a blessing."

She said laws should be changed which exclude gay people from being able to form recognized families and permanent relationships, and that just as new life results from monastic vows of monks and nuns, so "I don't see procreation as an activity which is limited to the reproduction of the human species."

In her belief, gay people can live together in a loving relationship with the same expectation of sharing in God's procreativity. Society's horror of lesbian women rearing their own children is an instance of intolerance, she said.

OUR PROPOSED CONSTITUTION FOR RATIFICATION AT CARBONDALE

SEE PAGE 7

GAY ALLIANCE FORMED AT FULLER

A new gay students organization has been formed at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. Fuller draws its students from various denominations including the ABCUSA. For information, write: The Alliance, P.O. Box 626, Pasadena, CA 91102.

CANADIAN ANGLICANS TO ORDAIN GAYS

The Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada will now permit the ordination of homosexual persons, providing they abstain from gay sex. Revered Edward Scott, primate of the church, says that public declaration of a priest's sexual orientation would hamper his ministry, and that therefore this will be a matter of privacy between the priest and his bishop. A spokesperson for the Canadian Baptists has condemned the move as "dressing the devil in a cassock."

(Editors Note: See Page 3)

ANTI-GAY EVANGELIST LOSES TV SHOW

Evangelist James Robison, a rising star in the electronic church, has had his weekly televised program cancelled by a Dallas television station as a result of anti-gay remarks he made on the air. WFAA-TV (Channel 8 in Dallas) Manager David Land said that the program—was canceled because of a "continuing problem" with Robison. According to Lane, Robison has constantly been making statements "about other religious organizations and community groups."

After the program in question, the Dallas Gay Caucus demanded and was granted equal time to respond to the evangelist. According to Lane, the transcript of the show was evaluated by the station's law firm which agreed "that the homosexual community had been attacked and should be given free time to respond. We believe our religious programs should not deal with such matters. We cover these type controversies on our news and public affairs shows where we can balance both sides of the issue."

(from the Gay Community News, Boston)

CHURCH APPOINTS LESBIAN

A Minnesota farm woman has been appointed to a state-wide Lutheran force on human sexuality. Diane Fraser was named by Dr. Herbert Chilstrom president of the Minnesota Synod of the Lutheran Church in America. LCA is the largest of North America's three major Lutheran churches.

Fraser, who farms in Montgomery is a former sociology instructor at an LCA school in St. Peter, Minnesota. In 1974, she was one of the founders, and currently is a national coordinator, of Lutherans Concerned, the caucus of gay and non-gay women and men from all major Lutheran churches, with 20 chapters in the U.S.

Fraser is the only woman and the only gay person on the eight member board.

1979 GAY CIVIL RIGHTS BILL BEFORE CONGRESS

A 1979 Gay Rights Bill, introduced by two chief sponsors, was introduced on March 20, 1979, according to Steve Endean, GayRights National Lobby Executive Director.

"With two strong Congressmen such as Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Los Angeles) and Rep. Ted Weiss (D-L-New York) acting as chief sponsors, I believe that the effect will be to strengthen our support and increase our visibility more effectively than ever before." Endean said.

When asked about the fact that both Congressmen represent districts with substantial gay constituencies, Endean said, "Both Congressmen have long records of support. That support is deep and sincere. To the extent that the makeup of their districts plays a role in their support, it should be understood as one more example of increasing 'gay clout' around the country. And that clout need not be limited to districts with massive gay constituencies. Local gay activists have organized and pressed their demands for justice on local and state elected officials for some time. To the extent that federal officials face these demands, our efforts are advanced."

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION OF AMERICAN BAPTISTS CONCERNED FOR GAY PEOPLE*

ARTICLE I

Name and Purpose

Section 1: Name. The name of this organization shall be American Baptists Concerned for Gay People. Nothing in this constitution shall be construed to forbid caucuses, subgroups or task forces within this organization from adopting similar titles of their own, e.g.: The Lesbian American Baptist Caucus of the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware, or the Gay Union of the American Baptist Churches of Michigan, as long as the names of such subgroups clearly indicate the separate or ancillary nature of the subgroups.

Section 2: Purpose. The purpose of this organization shall be to unite gay people and their families and friends within the American Baptist Churches of the USA for mutual assistance, education, support and communication; to cooperate with other groups in tasks of mutual interest; to persuade the ABCUSA to face honestly, aggressively and forthrightly the questions and needs of gay people both within the church and those driven from the church by its lack of understanding; and to work with the church in proclaiming the Christian gospel of love, joy and reconciliation to all gay women and men everywhere.

ARTICLE II

Organization

Section 1: Officers. There shall be four (4) officers—two (2) co-chairpersons (one male and one female), a secretary and a treasurer. The officers shall be elected at the biennial meetings of American Baptists Concerned.

Section 2: Steering Committee. The officers shall comprise the steering committee and shall meet as often as necessary to transact the business of the caucus between biennial meetings. The length of terms shall be two (2) years running from July 1 to June 30. If a position should become vacant between biennial meetings, the steering committee shall appoint a person to fill that vacancy.

Section 3: Task Forces, Subgroups and Caucuses. Nothing in this constitution shall be construed to forbid the steering committee or the members from forming task forces, subgroups or caucuses along regional, task/project, or other lines for the purposes of achieving the goals of this organization, nor from such subgroups electing their own steering committees or coordinators or other officers.

Section 4: Confidentiality. The membership and mailing lists of this organization shall be strictly confidential and shall not be revealed to any person without the consent of the individual members or mailing-list parties involved.

ARTICLE III

Amendments

Amendments to this constitution may be enacted by a majority vote of the membership or unanimous consent of the steering committee, either by mail or at a steering committee meeting called for that purpose.

*The above will be voted on for ratification at the biennial meeting of American Baptists Concerned in Carbondale, Illinois in June 1979. If you have any comments or questions and will not be present at Carbondale, please contact us via our mailing address (198 Santa Clara Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610) before June 1.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER
continued from page

7. Those of us who are gay American Baptists do not want only to attend church services. We want to be part of the church and its total work and witness. We ask for the opportunity of following our calling from God to live out our commitment to God in the church (ABCUSA) and the world.

See you in Carbondale and around the world.

Love,
Rodger Harrison

650 METHODIST WOMEN MINISTERS met recently at a Clergywomen's conference which proposed that the denomination's Social Principles be revised to permit ordination of homosexuals and to modify their statement on heterosexual relationships. They urged that the Church affirm the right of "every person, regardless of sexual preference" to share fully in the ministry.

FROM OUR MAILBOX...

"...Many of the people I meet here given the history and character of Nova Scotia in particular are from the Baptist tradition. I say "from" because many of them have had a very unhappy contact with the church since the Baptist Churches in Canada, most particularly in the eastern Maritime region tend to be very conservative in their attitude toward homosexuality. I have been very happy to be able to tell them about your group. In some it creates real interest and for all it is a sign of hope or just a consolation.

Personally I find your newsletter helpful and informative. I would suggest that raising issues and questions for discussion such as you often do in your "Editorial Comment" is especially helpful for meetings and animating rap sessions..."

1978-79 OFFICERS/STEERING COMMITTEE

President:	Rodger Harrison
Vice-President:	Rick Mixon
Secretary:	Ted Weeman
Treasurer:	Barbra MacNair

NEW ANTI-GAY LOBBY FORMED
continued from page 1

"The lesbian and gay communities have responded fantastically to the various referenda and initiative around the country, and we have had major successes in Seattle and California. However, many of us forget that the basic civil rights that we fight so hard to retain in a few localities simply do not exist throughout the majority of the country. The national lobbying effort, particularly in light of the threat of Christian Voice, poses a national test of our commitment.

Endean said that the Gay Rights National Lobby would continue its efforts in Congress through the 1979 Gay Civil Rights Bill and would maintain "watchdog" oversight of possible anti-gay bills and amendments proposed by Christian Voice. Contributions to assist the Lobby should be sent to: Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL), 1606 17th Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20009

CONTRIBUTORS

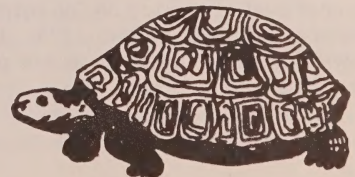
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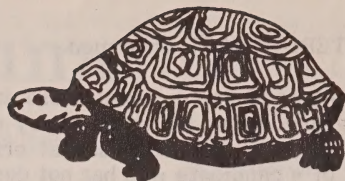
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THANKS...

to the mailing crew for their hard work.



Voice of the Turtle



July 1978, Vol. II, No. 2
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James B. Conant

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

This is the second day of a fast for human rights. Tom Brokaw has just interviewed a pastor from Wichita, Kansas telling how 83% of the voters determined the rights of gay people in that city. He kept repeating that they did not want homosexuals to be "role models" for their children. This is one of the lies which Anita Bryant continues to foist upon the innocent and ignorant in the USA. The most conservative psychologist would agree that sexual identification is "fixed" by age seven; the radicals hold for age 10 days to 3 years. Apparently the Dade County, Minneapolis, Wichita syndrome is out to get gay-identified pre-school and first grade teachers!

Today I want to write an open letter to the American Baptist Judson Bookstores. Back in December I walked into our Los Angeles Judson Bookstore to pick up sixty copies of our new hymnal, "Hymnbook for Christian Worship." As I was looking over the new books, my eye caught a single display 15 or 20 feet from the front door of a new book by Anita Bryant. I have waited several months, lest I say something in haste that should not be said.

Dear Judson Bookstore Managers:

The prominent display of dozens of copies of Anita Bryant's new book is offensive to gay American Baptists (roughly 10% of our denomination). I am writing to you today because most of our gay American Baptists are in too vulnerable a position to protest your unthinking injustice to us.

Last Christmas I had many cards and letters from around the United States and Europe. They were conspicuous in their absence of support for the work which I do for ABCUSA. However, one cousin, who is not an American Baptist, gave me great courage in her reference to the "wicked sunshine lady." Why is it that no American Baptist writer has dared to take on this high priestess of homophobia? She admitted in "Playboy" that she has not studied the whole Bible. She sounds like many superficial Christians who study the Bible to sharpen up their own personal points of view (prejudices) and then rush out to chop down others who may not agree with their conclusions. She appears more interested in whipping up homophobic support for her personal interpretations of scripture than in showing love and compassion for others. In her treatment of gay people, she vasculates between stoning us (letting the blood drip down our faces) and putting us in jail for twenty years.

(continued on page 2)

PRESBYTERIAN VOTE DENIES ORDINATION OF HOMOSEXUAL PERSONS

SAN DIEGO—After extensive committed debate the full session of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church voted not to ordain practicing homosexual persons as ministers in their church.

Delegates from the assembly claim this action followed years of study concerning social, psychological, as well as religious aspects of homosexuality, and previous to the vote, found themselves sharply divided as to the matter of ordination. The deliberative process resulted in some crucial points of consensus. A 56 member Committee on the Church and Homosexuality emerged from three days of discussion with two reports that disagreed on the ordination question but concurred in several key areas.

Homosexual Acts Called "Sinful"

A set of proposals that call homosexual acts 'sinful' was supported by 44 of the committee members. One such proposal counsels Presbyterians that 'our present understanding of God's Will precludes the ordination of persons who do not repent of homosexual practice.'

(continued on page 2)

Yet another statement urged those in charge of reviewing candidates for the ministry not to make a specific inquiry into the 'sexual orientation or practice' of a candidate who has not declared his or her sexual preference. The report also contained a condemnation of the 'widespread contempt for homosexual persons that prevails in our society' and voiced strong support for laws upholding civil rights for homosexuals. However, while not ordaining declared homosexual persons, the church will welcome 'such persons' as members.

Minority Urges Restraint

The two reports showed unanimity on issues of church membership, civil rights, and safeguards against what some Delegates feared would become a 'witch hunt' type of mentality in the screening of ministerial candidates.

Delegates used as a focal point for debate a long report from a special task force that had looked into the subject for 15 months after its establishment by the 1976 General Assembly. The task force was made up of a broad cross-section of church members including social scientists, theologians, and laypersons. The report, released January 23, included minority and majority recommendations that only served to increase the existing conflict.

Fourteen of the nineteen member task force underscored the right, covered by Presbyterian law, of each local Presbytery to decide the issue for itself, and restated the prerogative of each church to accept or deny individual candidates as ministers.

Gay Community News

PRESIDENT'S CORNER continued

I will defend to death your right to display and sell homophobic books, but I also demand my right to have you display and sell nonhomophobic books. I therefore call upon you to make arrangements to sell the following books:

- McNeill, Fr. John J., S.J., The Church and the Homosexual, Pocket Book, 224 pp, \$2.25
 Weinberg, George, Society and the Healthy Homosexual. St. Martins, 1972, paper, Doubleday.
 Babuscio, Jack, We Speak for Ourselves: Experiences in Homosexual Counseling. Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1977. Paper, 146 pp, #4.75.
 Pittenger, W. Norman, Gay Lifestyles: A Christian Interpretation. Los Angeles: Universal Fellowship Press (Box 5570, L.A. 90055), 1977. 134 pp, paper, \$4.95.
 Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey and Letha Scanzoni, Is the Homosexual my Neighbor? New York, Harper and Row. 1978, 176 pp., \$6.95.

At this point in history none of us has all the answers about the condition of gay people. Please make us free.

Yours faithfully,

Rodger Harrison

Dignity/Boston, Inc., the gay Catholic organization, was recently granted tax-exempt status by the main office of the Internal Revenue Service. The breakthrough ruling establishes the right of Dignity/Boston to solicit contributions from the public-at-large. Those donations will now be considered taxdeductible to the donors. This will have the effect of greatly expanding the fund-raising capabilities of the organization.

It is also a formal recognition by the I.R.S. of Dignity/Boston's status as a charitable, religious and educational organization under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code.

Dignity/Boston's tax-exempt status was recognized under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Code. Until very recently, recognition under this section was impossible to obtain by openly gay organizations which could at best hope for recognition under a less favorable section of the Code. That section, exempting the organization from paying corporate income taxes, gave little help to organizations depending for their support on public contributions and grants from foundations as well as from individuals.

As a prerequisite to the granting of the petition, the I.R.S. required a statement that Dignity/Boston was not primarily a social group, and that it would limit its activities solely to those of a charitable, educational and religious nature.

Gay Community News

Editorial Comment

GIVE THE CHURCHES A CHANCE

Reflections from Barbra MacNair

In the past 3 months since our last issue, a number of interesting opportunities for personal growth and education of others have been presented to me. I would like to share my reflections on these with you.

I had the opportunity in early January to talk with an Episcopal task force on life-styles about my experience as a gay Christian woman and share with them some of my ideas about the ways in which churches can minister to the gay community. I found the group to be interested in me as a person, open to my ideas and generally accepting. There was a general appreciation for our coming (I went with two other women) and I got the sense that we did help to enlighten and educate the members of the task force. I was encouraged that such a group existed!

Shortly after the task force meeting, Rick and I were asked to be part of a panel for a session at a local suburban church which was to deal with the gay Christian experience. This was part of a Lenten series which was dealing with contemporary social issues. (I applaud them for dealing with such issues as unmarried men and women living together, the contemporary woman, aging in our society, and homosexuality.)

Other panel members included a woman from MCC and an excommunicated Mormon man. It was moderated by a sympathetic and knowledgeable Episcopal priest. The experience was an emotional one for me. Hearing the pain of some of the other panel members as they told their stories was painful for me as well. In fact, I did my presentation through tears.

I was filled with a mixture of emotions. At several points, I felt like part of a "freak show"—I wondered how many people came to see a "real live one." I was overwhelmed by how inarticulate I was in front of this large group (50 or so)—I thought for days afterward about what I should have said and didn't. I was also frightened at the hostile reactions of a few of the people there—at a few points I was certain that some of them would have gladly stoned us. I can still hear in my mind the anger that we stirred up by our very presence.

However, some very positive things came out of the meeting. Numbers of people talked with us

(continued on page 4)

THOUGHTS ABOUT FREEDOM

by Randle R. Mixon

As Gay Freedom Day approaches, I find myself wondering what it means to be free. Freedom is something more than doing my own thing, more than license to do what I want when I want. My freedom is bound by my relationships—to myself, to other people, to God. And as a Christian, my freedom is shaped by my being "in Christ."

First, how can I be free to be me? I must accept all that I am—body, mind, soul, sexuality, gayness—as my gifts from God. I must respect and nurture and love these aspects of myself. I do not abuse my body. I develop my mental powers. I feed my soul. I honor my sexuality. I cherish my gayness. (The degree to which I live my life as a caring, loving person in Christ is directly proportionate to how free I am.)

Christ did teach us to love our neighbor as ourselves. The strong implication here is that loving neighbor and loving self are two sides of the same coin. To be free I must understand that God accepts me as I am and that it is alright to be whom God has created me to be.

Secondly, my freedom is contingent on the love and respect I have for the other people who inhabit the world. And to quote a well-worn cliché, if some of us are not free, then none of us is truly free. Therefore, I must be concerned for the condition of my sisters and brothers everywhere. How are we affected by socio-political structures? Who is hungry, thirsty, naked or imprisoned? Who experiences loneliness and alienation and how? And what of the fragile environment which we all share? To be truly free I must care what happens to people in the world around me. My love must be tempered by justice, and my judgements by compassion.

My relationship to God is intensely personal and always affected by the interplay between my finiteness and God's infinity. I stand in awe of the paradox that God who created all, also cares for me. It is frightening and fulfilling to realize this relationship with God—that God was in Christ reconciling the whole creation to God. Perhaps, with Tillich I can do no more than to work to accept the fact that I am accepted by God. This is a profound sense of freedom in knowing that in Christ I have escaped God's righteous judgement of me as a sinner and may in fact commune with my creator!

(continued on page 4)

ILLINOIS DEFEATS E.R.A.

Springfield, Ill.—On June 7, the Illinois House of Representative failed to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. The vote was 101 for the amendment and 64 against, six votes short of the majority 107 needed for approval.

The vote means that the amendment is dead in Illinois for 1978. Its prospects for adoption nationally by the March 1979 deadline are considered to be in serious jeopardy.

The defeat came after nearly three hours of heated emotional debate. Representative Ronald Griesheimer (R-Waukegan) argued against the amendment because it was supported by "a large group of bisexual or unusually sexual people." Another opponent, Rep. Donald Deuster (R-Mundelein) argued that ratification would force women to be drafted into the armed services and would encourage abortions.

Rep. Elroy Sandquist (R-Chicago) urged support of the E.R.A. asserting, "This is an equal rights amendment, a human rights amendment. It is not a homosexual amendment. It is a people's amendment."

*The ABCUSA is still planning to hold its 1979 Biennial Convention in Carbondale, ILL. We think this is deplorable considering the defeat of the ERA in that state and urge those of you who agree with us to write Dr. Robert Campbell at the ABCUSA Headquarters, Valley Forge, PA 19481 protesting this.

GIVE THE CHURCHES A CHANCE continued

afterward of their appreciation for our willingness to talk with them and answer their many questions. I was struck by the wide age range of those who came to hear us and those who stayed to ask more questions. As hard as it was, I was glad for this opportunity to help as least some people to understand that we are ordinary folks like them.

Our most recent speaking experience was sharing for a short time with the college and career group of my church. Although the time was too short for much except some initial introduction of who we were and why we were involved in the church, the session was, I think, helpful most of those who participated.

I am encouraged that people are willing to talk with us and willing to deal with the issue of homosexuality in a more open way. If any of you have personal reflections on your "educating" experiences, we would love to hear from you.

-4-

THOUGHTS ABOUT FREEDOM continued

What are some of the implications of this for me as a gay person? First, I must learn to understand my gayness as a gift from God. This is extremely difficult because our culture has done so much to condition us to believe that it is not okay to be who we are, that gay is sick. But we know that it is God who has made us and there is nothing inherently wrong with being gay. This has been a liberating realization for me and helped to heal my alienation from myself.

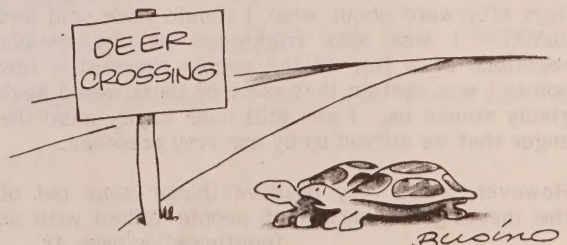
Secondly, I must treat my gayness as a gift from God in the way I relate to other people. I do not use people purely for my own pleasure. This is not to say that sexual relationships should not be pleasurable. Pleasure is a worthwhile objective of sexual relationships. But if I am in Christ, then Christ is a part of all my relating and especially such intimate relating as sexual relating. I treat both myself and my partner with care and respect and our relating is characterized by love.

Finally, I must stop seeing myself as a victim if I am indeed free. Many of us as gay people tend to downplay our own power and ability to be new creatures in Christ, to be able to live and act in the world as full citizens of this world who are also becoming full citizens of the Kingdom of God, to be effective agents of change and reconciliation. I can do what God calls me to do because I am free in Christ to be who God has created me to be. My gayness is an asset both to my doing and my being.

S.F. MAYOR OPPOSES BRIGGS INITIATIVE

SAN FRANCISCO—San Francisco Mayor George Moscone has joined the Bay Area Committee Against the Briggs Initiative (BACAB), and organization formed to oppose an anti-gay initiative which is to be on the November and which, if passed, would outlaw employment of homosexual teachers in the public schools.

Mayor Moscone said in a statement, "This dangerous measure would strike at the heart of our democracy and sanction wholly unjustified discrimination against gay citizens."



"You never see them giving us a break like that."

East Meets West

NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

CONFERENCE REPORT

"Gay and Christian" event at Kirkridge
by Barbra MacNair

One hundred Christian people from various denominations, some gay and some who work with gay people or are interested in the gay Christian experience, gathered at Kirkridge, an ecumenical retreat center in Bangor, PA, June 8-11 for a time of sharing, learning and growing. Rick and I were fortunate to be part of this group. As one of my roommates at the conference said, "it was a gathering of hungry people coming together to feed each other."

I was able to attend due to the support of friends and family—and my boss who organized the "fund-raising" drive. Others came from all over the U.S. and Canada. The mixture of personalities made for many hours of discussion, debate and even heated argument.

We listened to a variety of speakers whose personalities and stories were equally as diverse as the participants. They included: MALCOM BOYD, authors of *Take off the Masks*; BARBARA GITTINGS, lesbian activist and strategist and co-ordinator of the Task Force on Gay Liberation of the American Library Assoc.; JEANNINE GRAMICK, SSND, Co-director of New Ways Ministry in Mt. Rainier, MD; NANCY KRODY, from the United

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BOSTON GAY RELIGIOUS COALITION

BOSTON—Representatives of Dignity, MCC, Integrity, Am Tikvah and the Unitarian Universalist Association have recently held meetings out of which was formed 'The Boston Gay Religious Coalition.' The coalition, a historic first in the history of Boston's gay religious community, aims at fastening increased cooperation, contact and support not only for the religious communities themselves, but also as a hopeful symbol of unity, strength and concern for the larger gay community. Other groups expected to have input are the Lutherans and Methodists.

All members of the community have been urged to participate in this show of unity, strength and solidarity and to witness to the truth that God and religion are not to be equated with misguided hierarchy and twisted fundamentalists.

METHODIST SEMINARY EXPELS TWO GAY MEN

EVANSTON, Ill.—Garret Evangelical Theological Seminary, a training facility for ministers in the United Methodist Church, and an affiliate of Northwestern University, has earned a liberal reputation in the past for its admission of black and women students to its programs. Recently two members of the Masters of Divinity program, Terry Colbert and James Monroe, were expelled because of their admission of homosexuality.

Monroe and Colbert, who live together as lovers, had sent a letter to both church and seminary officials in which they declared that they were gay. Monroe said that they sent the letter for two reasons: "The first reason was honesty: we could not cover up since we were preparing for a profession in which we were to call others to the highest ethical accountability. Another reason was the need we felt for gay people to be open, to make it available for the stereotypes to be gotten rid of."

Following receipt of the letter, the Dean of the Seminary spoke with the couple on two separate occasions and indicated that he would recommend to the faculty that they not be advanced to their final year of studies because of the position of the Methodist Church. Both Colbert and Monroe were enrolled in a professional program in preparation for the ministry.

As is customary at Garret Seminary, the faculty meets at the end of the term to vote on each of the 325 students enrolled. At this meeting the Dean presented his recommendation to expel the students, and it was approved in a 15 to 10 vote.

Following the faculty decision, the local academic community responded with action. In a protest spearheaded by Professor Samuel Podes, Chair of Philosophy at Northwestern, 48 Northwestern University's professors declined to teach in future Garret programs. At Mundelein College, a Catholic institution near Garret, 53 members of the faculty sent out a statement saying, "We are dismayed that a Christian academic institution seems to be denying individual Christians the right and opportunity to theological education and the free and open struggle to define their own sexuality."

Church of Christ Gay Caucus; JOHN MC NEILL, S.J., author of The Church and the Homosexual, who was silenced by the Vatican on issues of homosexuality and sexual ethics and JAMES NELSON, Ph.d. professor of Ethics at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, Minnesota.

Nancy Krody told us of her expulsion from seminary for being gay and the various ways in which she has been kept from following her call because of her lifestyle. Malcom Boyd also shared with us through his readings his painful "coming out" process as a well-known Episcopalian priest. Their accounts were very personal and moving.

John McNeill shared with us the account of his book publication and consequent silencing by the Vatican. He told us the very moving story of his call to ministry and explained his reasons now for obeying the silence amidst criticism by some who think he should give up on the church.

Jeannine Gramick presented "facts and fictions" about homosexuality and gave suggestions for ways of giving people the "facts." Barbara Gittings also presented some practical information on strategies and organization for gay liberation and education.

James Nelson, who to me was the most exiting of all the speakers, presented us with his thoughts on a "Theology of Human Sexuality as a Context for a Theology of Homosexuality." His ideas were well thought out and presented and so new to me that my mind is still processing them. I hope in some later issue to summarize some of his thoughts or at least give a list of his writings for you to read.

There is not space or time to fully explain what happened at Kirkridge. It will have to suffice to say that we left nourished and affirmed and ready to continue the struggle of living as gay Christians in a society that generally sees the two as mutually exclusive. I would highly recommend this experience to you and hope that some of you will attend next year's conference.

GAY'S PRAYER

I never loved the man I loved—
Don't know him yet, you see.
Lord Jesus, let me find that man,
And let that man be ME!

I never loved another man
Whose love for me was true.
Please, Jesus, let me find that man,
And let that man be you!!

POT-POURRI

Word from Ted Weeman
Christian friends! Warm and loving greetings!

I am now in my fifth month as a Peace Corps nursing instructor at a government sponsored school here in the capital city. My 20odd years of nursing has afforded me ample background to instruct in the psychology and psychiatric nursing specialty. Though exhausting in work load, I am daily encouraged, motivated and stimulated as I interact with these young people representing the 16 tribal areas of Liberia.

Apparently there is little or no open, visible gay life as we understand it. Social tradition is based on male-dominated, female owned, heterosexual society in which all men (and women) must play their parts to produce children. I have noticed an occasional European or American gay person but never have I seen a similar Liberian. There is homosexuality here if conversations with students can be gauged as accurate. But it and its members are underground, probably wearing masks of conventional sexuality.

Peace Corps Washington had advised me of this state of affairs prior to my arrival. Peace Corps urged me to seriously weigh how vital I deemed sexual expression before coming to West Africa.

I'm glad I came and I'm glad things here are as they are. I believe I have the opportunity to express the humanness that unites all people in searching for life's answers. As that element of "uniqueness" is submerged for a time, I am discovering how good it is to be a part of the human race, concentrating and focusing on the most important relationship of all--myself with God through Christ Jesus.

In turning my life over to God for service, I find that God's knowlege of what is good for me is absolute. If I have been led here to be a Light, will I not be filled with God's Light constantly and have all my needs provided?

What rich surprises are in store for the child of God who allows God to lead, to fulfill and to provide! I am rejoicing in a new way, in a new place, with a new song in my heart.

Warm Greetings of love to you all , TED

*Ted would love to hear from any of you who would like to write. His address is:

Walter R. Weeman (PVC)
c/o Peace Corps Office, P.O. Box 707
Monrovia, Liberia WEST AFRICA

Models In Ministry

We received the following copy of a letter which was sent by the Young Friends of North America to the Save Our Children campaign. "We are sending it to you," they write "in the hope that it can serve as one example of a sensitive way of dealing with homophobia." We pass it on to you, our readers because we feel it is a "Model in Ministry."

Dear Friends:

The Religious Society of Friends has many different gatherings of its people. One of these is the Young Friends of North America which is a body of Quakers who, especially during one week each summer, meet to share our struggles and growth in the Spirit of God.

You, too, are an organization of people who seek the leadings of God. We both are striving to follow a common Spirit, and this is the source of our actions. At our recent conference the Spirit has led us to express these thoughts to you.

As Friends, we believe that there is that of God in each person. To deny human rights to anyone is to degrade that part of God. We deplore the use of Christianity to justify oppression. Denial of human rights is oppression and we feel that this was not Christ's intention. It is our understanding that you are Christians, believing that Christ gave his life for every human being. We call you to consider the fact that people of homosexual orientation are no less human. Thus, we believe that it is God's will that people of homosexual orientation receive our deepest love which makes discrimination impossible.

People in homosexual lifestyles have made, and are making, important contributions to society in education and others areas. To deny these people access to jobs, housing and legal rights, deprives of their God-given talents. We approach you in the Spirit of love and common fellowship in God. We have great concern for you and for that of God within you. For we feel when we oppress others we oppress that of God within ourselves. We urge you to do some sincere soul-searching concerning your position on human rights, and welcome further dialogue, if you feel so led.

STATE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ENDORSE CIVIL RIGHTS FOR HOMOSEXUALS

ST. PAUL, MN--Six leaders of Minnesota Protestant denominations issued statements opposing repeal of an amendment to St. Paul's civil rights ordinance which prohibited discrimination against gays. Regarding the statements by the seven religious leaders, Craig L. Anderson, a spokesperson for St. Paul Citizens for Human Rights, said they represent "a clear indication of both the broad based and reasoned support for maintaining human rights in our community."

Protestant leaders issuing statements included the Rev. Robert W. Thatcher, area minister for Mid-American Baptist Churches (American Baptist). Mr. Thatcher said, "Like all persons, homosexuals have a right to human respect, stable friendships, economic security and social equality."

Unfortunately, despite the efforts of such people as Robert Thatcher, the ordinance was repealed.

LUTHERAN SYNOD CONVENTION OPPOSES BRIGGS TEACHER INITIATIVE

LOS ANGELES--The annual convention of the Pacific Southwest Synod of the Lutheran Church in American declared its support May 7 for "the human and civil rights of all persons regardless of sexual orientation." The resolutions was adopted almost unanimously, after little debate.

The resolution, which notes that "legislation now proposed or anticipated on the territory of Synod would limit the civil or human rights of individuals of differing sexual orientation," was recommended for adoption by the convention's Reference and Counsel Committee after the panel received 3 different resolutions written by a total of 10 lay and clergy delegates.

The original language of the resolutions cited an anti-gay initiative measure regarding school teachers, being advanced by an Orange County (California) politician who was a candidate for the Republican nomination for governor in the June 6

REGARDING OUR FINANCES...

Our mailing list has increased to well over 300. This is great news because it means that we are reaching more people but, it also means our costs for printing and postage (especially with the increased postal rates) are sky-rocketing. Many of those on the mailing list are not paid subscribers. Some cannot afford to subscribe and others (some regional executives, area ministers and prominent ministers) would not read our newsletter if we didn't send it to them. These are people who we feel need to know we exist, so we send the "Voice of the Turtle" to them in hopes that it will help to educate those in prominent positions within the ABCUSA.

This is all to say that donations to the cause will be gratefully accepted. Our only costs are printing and mailing. All labor is donated. (If anyone in the S.F. bay area would be willing to donate time, we could use this too. Call Barbra at: 655-1599.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE

We have copies of informational brochures and articles as well as bibliographies which are available at cost (for xeroxing) plus postage. If you are interested in these, send for a list and order form.

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Randle (Rick) Mixon

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Material is solicited for publication; editor and staff reserve the right to edit such.

AMERICAN BAPTIST CONCERNED
OFFICER FOR 1978-79

Rodger Harrison, President
Walter Weeman, Secretary

Randle Mixon, Vice-President
Barbra MacNair, Treasurer

TURTLES REACHING OUT...

"I am a 29 year old, white male who finds himself in prison for the first time. Surrounded by violence and the insanity of hardened personalities, I am totally without friends to help me return to society. Will you please make my name and address available to your readers. I would like to correspond with anyone who would care to find a friendship through corresponding. All responses will be answered. Race, age or sex is of no importance.

Sincerely,

John Sunderman #138098, Box 45699,
Lucasville, OH
45699

WON'T YOU JOIN US? Be A Turtle!

Subscribe to The Voice of the Turtle today.

One-year subscription.....\$5.00

Other donations are gratefully accepted.

If the fee is beyond your means, let us know and we will make other arrangements.

Make checks payable to "American Baptists Concerned" and mail to:

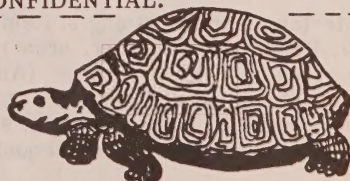
American Baptist Concerned
c/o Barbra MacNair
198 Santa Clara Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610

Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____

OUR MAILING LIST
IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.



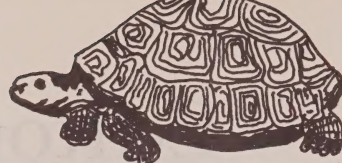
"Behold the turtle: he makes progress only when he sticks his neck out."

James B. Conant

Voice of the Turtle

October 1978, Vol. II, No. 3

The American Baptists Concerned (a gay caucus) publishes its newsletter, VOICE OF THE TURTLE, quarterly. The name and address of a person or business herein is not to be construed as an indication of sexual preference.



"Behold the turtle: (it) makes progress only when (it) sticks (its) neck out."

James B. Conant

A B CONCERNED DENIED OFFICIAL STATUS IN THE ABC/USA

In a letter dated June 14, 1978, American Baptists Concerned officially applied for Under-represented Group status in the ABC/USA. We argued that:

1. We have members throughout the country and are in the process of setting up regional groups.
2. While many of our constituents are not permitted to be "clearly identifiable" we do have a significant group which is, and which participates in the general biennial caucus meeting at which officers are elected. Our quarterly newsletter, "The Voice of the Turtle," is sent all over the world.
3. While approximately 10% of ABC/USA are gay people there is not one openly gay person on the General Board.
4. As loyal American Baptists of long standing, we have overall agreement with the purpose statement and related goals of the American Baptist Convention. We would remind ABC/USA that "Freedom of Conscience" is an historic Baptist distinctive which has been slighted in these days.
5. While our membership is open to people of every age, race and sex, our concern is for people who are gay or gay-identified.
6. Because gay people have been part of the American Baptist Convention from the beginning, we as an organized group are not interested in causing radical change in the polity, practices, or beliefs of the ABC, but wish to bring an integrity and honesty to a very sensitive issue so that the ABC/USA can become the inclusive community to which Jesus Christ has called us to be.

On June 20, 1978, the Credentials and Caucus Committee of the ABC/USA voted unanimously to reject our application because "...the Caucus does not have an interest or concern which is restricted to age, sex or race."

The Committee has invited two members of American Baptists Concerned to meet with them in Philadelphia on Dec. 2, 1978, to explore possible alternatives to Under-represented Group status. They have requested that we be prepared to:

1. Furnish more specific data about membership in reference to numbers of members and the ABC affiliation of members.

NO 'STEPCHILDREN' IN THE FAMILY OF GOD

The following is excerpted from the report of Judge Charles Z. Smith, immediate past President of the ABC to the General Board of ABCUSA December 5, 1977. This was brought to our attention by one of our caucus members and we in turn would like to share it with you.

"We must also intelligently and thoughtfully explore in open discussion and debate the subject of human sexuality and its component, homosexuality, in the context of the Christian life."

"As a denomination, we have already asked God to strengthen our resolve to provide meaningful ministries to all persons as members of the 'Family of God,' including those who are homosexuals. Our Ministers Council has addressed itself to the issue of ordination of homosexuals. But we are lagging behind other faiths and denominations in developing a definitive position on the status of homosexuals in our American Baptist fellowship."

"We cannot continue to sweep the issue of homosexuality under the rug. I do not believe there are 'stepchildren' in the Family of God."

2. Provide some information about the geographic distribution of the membership.
3. Describe the goals and objectives of the Gay Caucus within the ABC Family.
4. Indicate in what ways the Gay Caucus would like to contribute to the common life of the ABC.

Among other things, the Committee was concerned "...to know more about how the Gay Caucus proposes as a caucus to enhance the common life of the ABC rather than to generate what appear to be radical changes in practice and belief from the perspective of a large part of our constituency."

Prior to our meeting with the Committee, we would greatly appreciate both your prayers and your input on this crucial issue for American Baptists Concerned.

Editorial Comment

LABELS AND LIBERATION

by Randle R. Mixon

The juxtaposition of two recent events are the inspiration for this article. First, I read some excerpts from my last Turtle article in a Sunday morning church service this summer. I deleted the references to homosexuality, but I was still accused of "flaunting my gayness." In the second instance, I did a rather awkward negative job of coming out to a class I am taking at a local university. This was partly due to strong feelings of resistance I have to labeling myself and partly due to my inability to shake off some of those negative attitudes I have had inbred in me about being gay.

The juxtaposition of these two events helped to delineate for me a chronic dilemma that most gay people face. In the first place, most of us do not want any labels which prevent our being seen as whole persons and secondly our only hope of liberation is to label ourselves.

The more I have publicly identified myself as a gay person, the more I have felt the pressure of being cut off, of being seen as half a person (or less), of being awarded only second class citizenship at the best. I know, and others who know me know that these identifications do not fit me, that I am a whole (and complex) person, and that my gayness does not define me totally.

So why, I am asked, do you label yourself and risk being seen as that gay man who is always flaunting his lifestyle and sexuality? I am sure the reasons are complex and the list long but I will share three reasons with you.

First, to reiterate what I said in my last article, I am who God has made me to be. Every time I deny or downgrade my being (which includes my gayness) then I deny or downgrade God's creation and my right of self. This is true when I denigrate any part of my being and, I think for gay people this is especially true of our sexuality. Our sexuality is to be celebrated and shared, not hidden or denied because of feelings of guilt or shame or for fear of social rejection.

I am aware that this last notion of sharing and celebrating sexuality will conflict with the value held by many that sexuality is private and should be kept in secret. I am not advocating public displays of sexuality or sharing the intimate details of your

life, except to the extent that we as Christians seek to share life—that is to commune—with one another, and to the extent that we as Christian gay people seek to have pride and respect for ourselves and from others for who we are.

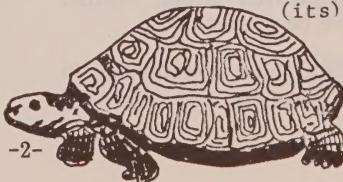
Finally, we need to confront the reality that we live in a political world. Our oppression as gay people comes from socio/religious sources. (Witness the power of the churches, especially Baptist churches, behind the Briggs initiative, Anita Brvant's campaign, Wichita, St. Paul and Eugene.) The means to the social change which will end that oppression is political. The most powerful political tool we as gay people have is simply to identify ourselves. If you do not believe me, make every effort you can to see the documentary film "The Word Is Out" in which 26 vastly different gay people simply share who they are. I have seen nor read no more powerful argument for gay liberation.*

For many, the prospect of coming out, of labeling yourself for reasons of celebration, pride, or politics is terrifying. Believe me, I understand. The words still stick in my throat sometimes, even after more than 5 years of being out. Coming out is a process with moments of pain and joy, of fear and confidence, of disappointment and fulfillment. Bigotry, hatred and fear will not simply go away by your saying out loud "I am gay." The risks are great; the reward may be nothing more than the right to celebrate your being, to respect yourself and to make the world a better place for us and our brothers and sisters who follow.

* "Word is Out" is being shown nationally on public broadcasting stations as well as in local theatres. For information regarding showings in your areas we would suggest that you contact your local tv station or theatre or write directly to the producers: Adair Films, P.O. Box 77043, San Francisco, Calif. 94107.

"Behold the turtle: (it) makes progress only when (it) sticks (its) neck out."

James B. Conant



POT-POURRI

Hello friends in Christ,

Just doesn't seem possible that ten months have passed so quickly! In 8 weeks, I shall be in the USA for a brief and needed holiday prior to returning to West Africa for my second year of teaching. It will be good to see many of you again December 17-January 19.

Recently I have been reading from Ephesians and have been struck again by the effective and forceful vocabulary Paul uses to show us what we can be as we rest in the strength of God. Certain situations in my life during this year have certainly tempted me to become cynical as to human nature and behavior. Yet Eph. 5: 1-2 urges us to remain in an attitude and atmosphere of LOVE in which we become a "sweet smelling offering and sacrifice that pleases God."

Frank B. Whitney writes in "Unity Magazine" that we "can be upbeat, for we have within ourselves a well spring of joy. There is within us a spirit that is unaffected, not cast down by what others do and don't do, say and don't say." Over and over, dear friends, I am brought back to the place of deciding just where my source is—self or Savior. When I keep myself centered in God, I remain calm, serene and joyously loving. That is what Paul means by being only controlled by LOVE.

Joel Goldsmith in his book Man was not Born to Cry writes—"the givingness of life comes forth from the lovingness of the Soul, and this makes life an adventure and a joy." Eternal life is a life given one to love—for oneself first and then God and others. God bless you all and keep you loving as He has loved us.

Warmest love,
Ted Weeman

Back in the winter of 1972 Ralph James Wass, Jr. was only a telephone call from the crisis intervention hotline in Los Angeles. "Jim" was recovering from mono and needed a place to stay in Costa Mesa so he could begin working two hours a day. He moved into the parsonage and stayed 18 months as he regained his health and he began to meet people in and through our church. He was a stranger from a foreign land.

For 10 years Jim attempted to immigrate to the USA. After working in a garage in Costa Mesa for 4 or 5 years, receiving "slave wages under the table" (Jim's words) and being told that everything was coming along ok with his papers, he discovered that his employer had not sent in the first papers. Twice Jim returned to

(over)

President's Corner

Dear Friends,

Here in California, gay people are undergoing an insidious attack under a pseudo-religious guise. Fullerton's junior state senator, John Briggs, assisted Anita Bryant in her "Save our Children" program. He then returned to California to launch his "Protect our Children" campaign. Many of our American Baptist churches helped him to get the signatures which got Proposition 6 on the ballot. I attended a Briggs meeting for clergy in Anaheim. With misuse of scripture, statements about the "recruitment" of homosexuals, and a selection of facts to cloud the real issues, he attempted to whip up support from the 19 fundamentalist preachers in the room.

I am sure that many of our good American people are not aware that Proposition 6 would affect heterosexual people as well as homosexual people. It would be a chokehold on all heterosexual school employees who might be tolerant of homosexuals. It would invade the private lives of all California school teachers. It would take away their constitutional rights to privacy and free speech. With Proposition 6 in California, and with the American Baptist Gay Caucus, it is time to remind the majority that WE ARE YOUR CHILDREN TOO! I'd like to leave you with a true story about a gay child.

On Monday evening, May 22, Jim called several friends and asked them to pray for him at 9 pm. The last phone call was to his friend on the Santa Ana police force at 8:30 pm. Jim left the comfort and warmth of Brad's home, walked into the center of a bean field, placed the muzzle of a 38 caliber revolver to his right temple and fired one shot. When the news reached me the next day, I was distraught. What a waste—a 29-year old man in the best of health.

his home in Canada and discovered that he could not survive the long, lonely, dark winters. Twice he called and asked if he could live in my house until he could get started again. He returned the last time in August 1977. At that time, he said if he did not get a "green card" this time he would kill himself because he was never going to go back to Canada.

In 1972, Jim warned me that some of his friends knew him by his first name, Ralph. The first time he went into a gay bar, and a person asked his name, he panicked. He had heard that the mere whisper of his gayness would bar him from US citizenship. After the first moment of panic, he answered with his middle name "Jim." From that moment on his friends and acquaintances were divided into the "Ralph" and the "Jim" people. Tragically, the two groups never met.

Ralph James Wass, Jr. lived under the tension of a double life for ten years. There was always the danger that something from the past would come up and jeopardize his immigration. He stopped attending Christ Chapel last fall but began attending the gay community center. For the first time he began to work on his self-image and to feel good about himself as a gay person. Five days before his death, I sat beside him at the GCC. The following Friday he adjusted the points on my Datsun. I had never seen him in such a good mood. He told me how he had gone back to work for the same person in Costa Mesa and that he had already earned enough to pay the first \$500 to an immigration attorney. The employer had agreed to send the check. On Monday night Jim's voice had a note of decision when he called me at 8:00 pm and asked me to pray for him at 9:00 pm. He said that he had had another turn down in the process of getting his work permit. His employer had not sent the check to the lawyer and had sent him away with "Stop bothering me or I won't send any money." I told him that 9 pm is the most spiritual time of the day because it is the time at which many prayers are made for spiritual healing. Jim relayed this information to Sgt. Alan Weiss who then spend the night trying to locate his friend "Ralph." With the first light of morning he saw Jim's body in the field. By that time every on duty policeman in Santa Ana knew that one of their men had lost a good friend. It took Sgt. Weiss five minutes to muster up enough strength to radio for back up. Immediately police rushed to support him. It was not until Thursday morning that Sgt. Weiss and I were able to get together and talk. After two hours we agreed that had we talked a week before, Jim would still be alive.

If the "Ralph" and the "Jim" people could have met and been supportive, he would be alive today. The thing which defeated Jim was the same thing which attacks each one of us: Homophobia. There was not enough support for Jim as a gay person to keep him going through the destructiveness of life. His mother and father gave him no support. His friends were too busy. He couldn't tell the "Ralph" friends. The "Jim" friends were into their own thing. Rod McKuen and Jim had been lovers. At the memorial service, Rod read a poem which he had written for Jim in 1971. It begins: "Someone wrote of you that people work a lifetime to attain your natural innocence. I believe that to be so, for on seeing you the first time out I remember that I felt as though I'd come upon the living Christ."

The death of Ralph James Wass, Jr. causes us to deal with five areas of life:

1. Suicide. This is one legitimate way out for us. In the gay world, I hope that the suicide rate is beginning to fall as a result of the work of groups like MCC and Gay Community Centers. There are those who believe that suicide is a cardinal sin and that belief is ok for them. For me, the only problem with suicide is that it is a permanent solution which brings hurt to others.
2. Anger. I am still angry about the waste of such a beautiful young man. Jim was one of the finest auto mechanics around. Rod McKuen described him as "a sheep in a world of wolves." He was a rare "giver" in the midst of all the "users."
3. Projection. In Jim's death we all see our eventual dissolution. This body will not survive forever. Only that which is Christ-like will survive. If others cannot see Christ in us then we had better get our acts together.
4. Guilt. We all feel guilty. If we had only taken more time to get to know Jim better, if we had only gone one more "second mile" with him, he might be alive now.
5. Homophobia. With dedicated homophobes like John V. Briggs and Anita Bryant, gay people need all the support we can get. I have a private theory that we do not commit suicide for just one reason, but for a series of seemingly insignificant reasons which pile up and compound until life is unbearable. We all have the same amount of mental and spiritual energy each morning, but we can expend it all on homophobia and

Models In Ministry

NEW YORK BISHOP FOR GAY RIGHTS

The Bishop of New York, the Rev. Paul Moore, Jr. has written an open letter to Integrity, the gay Episcopal group. Bishop Moore has written about his "shock and distress" at the backlash against gay rights.

The letter says "Standing for gay rights as many of you know better than I, can be a perilous business. I personally believe, however, that human rights are inseparable and that standing for gay rights also is standing for the rights of every human being to equality of opportunity in all areas of life.

"I also pledge my support for the cause of gay rights, and feel honored to be part of this struggle. The Church has a very special role in this issue, but the misunderstanding of the moral dimensions of it are intense. I believe we have the obligation to stand for gay rights as civil rights, to continue a compassionate concern for gay people and also for those who, as yet, are caught up in the prejudice against gay people, and to educate one another and those outside the movement with clarity and objectivity as to the facts of the issues involved."

AMERICAN CANON SPEAKS PRO-GAY

WOKING, ENG.—Canon Mary Simpson—the American priest who caused controversy in Anglican Church circles when she became the first ordained woman priest to preach at Westminster Abbey—has spoken out in support of the gay movement.

She told a meeting of clergypersons at Horsfell Vicarage: "I think the MCC (Metropolitan Community Church) is fine. I've had to face prejudice against homosexuals from some people who think that all women priests are lesbians, so I support what they (MCC) are trying to do."

Canon Simpson added that she realized that her views were at odds with "conventional Christian views" on homosexuality but stated "I'm for gay liberation, so I lend MCC my support."

Her views were not accepted wholeheartedly by the assembled clergypersons. One stated afterward: "I don't think this is a Biblical way to go about this at all. One has to treat homosexuals with compassion and try to lead them towards healthy heterosexual relationships. After all, they are sick, aren't they?"

EPISCOPAL BISHOP DENOUNCES PROPOSITION 6 IN CALIFORNIA

California's Episcopal bishop came out against the Briggs initiative recently and said it was part of "a veritable witch hunt" against homosexuals. The initiative, Proposition 6 on the November ballot, provides for the firing of teachers and other school employees who are homosexuals or advocate their causes.

Bishop C. Kilmer Myers told about 500 worshipers in Grace Cathedral in San Francisco that he had a responsibility to take a position on the issue because "God's cause, Jesus' cause, was the greater humanization of mankind." The initiative, he said, would "erode the personal rights of men and women of gay sexual orientation."

Bishop Myers told the congregation that the church's record on the issue of gay rights was "deeply stained with the blood of executed homosexuals." In opposing the ballot proposition Bishop Myers told worshippers, "The Hitler program of human extermination began with the homosexuals. One wonders, if the initiative passes, who will be next—the psychiatrists, the psychologists, the clergy?"

ARCHBISHOP COMES OUT AGAINST 6

Roman Catholic Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco issued a statement strongly opposing passage of Proposition 6. The archbishop, who is head of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, said the proposed initiative on the Nov. 7 ballot is "perilously vague." He said there was serious reason to believe the proposed constitutional amendments in Prop. 6 "would tend to violate and would wrongly limit the civil rights of homosexual persons."

"The moral teaching of the Catholic Church on homosexuality is clear and consistent," he said. "It distinguishes homosexual activity from homosexual orientation. The bishops of the US reaffirmed this moral teaching in these words: 'Homosexual activity, as distinguished from homosexual orientation, is morally wrong.'

"While these two principles of parents' rights and the morality of homosexual activity are clear, we cannot ignore the issues of justice and civil rights contained in this initiative.

continued on next page

have nothing left for creativity and growth. All gay people need support for their gayness from their mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles and aunts. We need support from our peers. As long as Jim had to live a double life with the "Ralph" people never meeting the "Jim" people, he was squandering precious energy on the fear of their meeting. The time comes for each one of us when we can no longer cope with living in a closet. The fact of our gayness is a problem to no one. Others people's homophobia may be a problem. For that we have no responsibility. MCC, Gay Community Centers and American Baptists Concerned provide places where gay people can find healthy support from other gays. Jim's death points up the enormity of our pilgrimage to be Christ-like at the deepest levels. These are dangerous days for gay people. We can no longer support the luxury of superficial living. Victories in the courts are changing the homophobia stance of the immigration service and other parts of government. There is nothing we can do to bring Jim back, but let's not fail the next Jim who comes along.

Yours in Christ, Rodger Harrison

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ARCHBISHOP COMES OUT AGAINST 6 continued

"In the first place, we must question whether there is a need for the amendments contained in Prop. 6, since there are already state laws which forbid use of the classroom for promoting unacceptable conduct or lifestyle.

"In addition, the civil rights of persons who are homosexual must also be our concern. Hence, the American bishops affirmed the following principle in a national pastoral on moral values: 'Homosexuals, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. They have a right to respect, friendship and justice.'

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"...Continue to send me the Voice of the Turtle. ...Let the additional donation take care of 1 other person who wants to be educated without paying for it or who wishes that your newsletter wouldn't keep coming." Another exec. writes: "...I read the current issue (of Voice of the Turtle) with considerable interest. Courage it takes, and that brings you hope, I'm sure." We thank you both for your interest and support.

TREASURER'S REPORT

I am happy to report that we had enough money to put out this issue of the "Turtle." However, it is a somewhat shorter issue (6 rather than 8 pages) because we are low on funds. It costs about \$125 to print and mail each issue (and our mailing list is growing). As of 10/16/78, our balance is about \$5.00. If you haven't sent in your subscription yet, how about mailing us a check today.

Barbra MacNair, Treasurer